

**ITEM III**

**COMMUNITIES IN MOTION  
REGIONAL LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2030**

**DOCUMENT #2:  
REGIONAL VISION**

**DRAFT**

**October 5, 2004**

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## REGIONAL VISION

This draft document serves to distill a regional vision from all of the documents reviewed and most notably from the COMPASS and ITD visioning processes. The regional vision will be used to guide the development and implementation of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

The draft regional vision reflects a focus on transportation and is appropriate for the LRTP. The vision may be expanded to more directly reflect the land use and economic components of a regional vision. Consideration should be given to this, as the draft regional vision is discussed with committees involved in the Communities in Motion project.

### **Draft Vision**

Citizens of the Treasure Valley envision a region where quality of life is enhanced and rural, small town, and urban communities are connected by an innovative, effective, multi-modal transportation system.

- o This system will support the economic vitality of the area, serving growth and development in a manner that supports the existing urban core and regional activity centers, maintains the region's rural character, and minimizes impacts on the natural and built environment.
- o The transportation system will provide a variety of options to allow the region's residents and visitors to safely and efficiently travel throughout the region.
- o A cost-effective, multi-modal transportation system will be developed with reliable funding sources, placing priority on the maintenance and optimization of our existing system, while preserving opportunities for future expansion.

### **The Basis of this Vision**

This vision is intended to describe qualities of the region that citizens and elected officials are committed to achieving over the next 25 years. It has been drawn from a variety of sources, building upon the local and regional planning and visioning efforts that have already taken place and striving to pull the common elements of those documents into a single vision that can serve the entire six-county area.

### ***Communities in Motion***

The first source for the vision is the work that was done at the beginning of the Communities in Motion process, with the COMPASS Board visioning process in July 2003. The public reviewed the Board's vision during the Community Cafés held in Boise, Meridian, Eagle, and Nampa between November 2002 and January 2003. The resulting one-sentence vision has been slightly modified to be the first sentence of the vision listed above, and portions of the mission have been incorporated into the draft regional vision. The full Communities in Motion mission and vision are listed on the Communities in Motion Web site <http://www.communitiesinmotion.org/> and below.

*Vision:*

We envision a Treasure Valley where quality of life is enhanced and communities are connected by an innovative, effective, multi-modal transportation system.

*Mission (Draft):*

The Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan is to develop, implement, and maintain an interconnected, multi-modal, and safe transportation system that enhances quality of life and supports a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region, including a sustainable regional core and dynamic regional activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing, and services in a walkable environment.

However, the initial Communities in Motion process covered only the Ada and Canyon County portions of the project's study area and did not have public forums in Boise, Elmore, Gem, or Payette Counties. Therefore, it was necessary to look to other documents to ensure that the vision was representative of the entire region.

***Idaho Transportation Department Draft Vision & District 3 Workshop***

In March and April of 2003 the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) convened workshops in each of the ITD's six districts to help develop a shared transportation vision for all of Idaho. ITD's District 3 encompasses the six counties of the Communities In Motion plan along with Owyhee, Washington, Adams, and Valley Counties. The 110 attendees came from throughout the region and discussed the existing conditions and identified the following issues as the top four for the future:

- o Developing better coordination between planning agencies and between land-use and transportation choices.
- o Maximizing the existing infrastructure and resources available.
- o Developing more comprehensive infrastructure and resources available.
- o Increasing public awareness of transportation issues and the effect of transportation on economics, livability and the success of communities and the state in the future.

ITD developed a draft Vision to address these and other issues identified by citizens in Districts throughout the State. The Principles of that Vision are:

- o Plan, preserve, develop, operate, and maintain the transportation system in a fully integrated manner.
- o Support quality of life and be endorsed by citizens and stakeholders who own and use the system.
- o Provide adequate funding that allows multimodal flexibility, with state and local commitment to integrated transportation and land use planning.
- o Support modal choices for all individuals and clearly address the needs of all populations, including those with low incomes, people with disabilities, and the aging population.

### ***Other Local Plans***

In addition to the COMPASS and ITD plans, the vision incorporates concepts from the range of transportation, land use, economic development, transit, and TDM documents reviewed for the project. The visions, goals, missions, and policies from those plans have several common themes, including efforts to provide transportation choices, a desire to maintain the rural character in many communities, and the need to develop reliable funding sources to maintain the existing network and preserve opportunities for future needs.

### ***Federal Requirements***

In addition to local components in the vision, **Federal transportation legislation** <<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/h2400iii.htm#3004>> states that regional transportation plans consider projects and strategies that will:

- o support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- o increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- o increase accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight;
- o protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve the quality of life;
- o enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes for people and freight;
- o promote efficient system management and operation; and,
- o emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system.

While these Federal factors go into more detail on some issues than the vision does, the Long Range Transportation Plan will address each of these issues.

### ***Policy Implications of the Vision***

A vision, by its very definition, sets out a goal not already achieved. In most cases, to accomplish that vision, a change of tactics may be necessary. The following section identifies policy implications associated with key portions of the draft regional vision. These need to be considered during development of the Long Range Transportation Plan to ensure that the vision can be accomplished. Several of these policies may already be in place in some jurisdictions but need to be added in others to ensure consistency throughout the region, while others will require comprehensive changes at the local, county, regional, and state level.

### ***Multi-Modal System / Provide a Variety of Options***

While each plan acknowledged that the majority of trips currently takes place in single-occupant vehicles and will continue to do so, each included a goal to provide more transportation options. These options can include improving conditions for walking and bicycling, adding transit service, or undertaking additional transportation demand management (TDM) measures.

### *Walking*

To be a viable transportation option, walking requires several specific factors. In urbanized areas these are:

- o a compact mix of uses to provide origins and destinations within a reasonable walking distance of each other and
- o interconnected streets with sidewalks provided on both sides of the street and short blocks or pedestrian paths providing opportunities for the shortest possible trip between two points.

In more rural areas, walking should be provided on multi-use paths or grade-separated roadway shoulders.

### *Bicycling*

Bicycling needs vary more by cyclist experience and age and roadway volume than they do rural and urban development characteristics. Generally experienced cyclists prefer wide, outside lanes where they can travel alongside traffic. More inexperienced cyclists prefer a network of striped bicycle lanes and off-road pathways connecting residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, and employment centers. As volumes and speeds increase, the creation of physical separation between cyclists and motor vehicle traffic becomes more important, with wide multi-use paths needed to parallel interstates or congested arterials. Other factors such as terrain and climate significantly influence bicycling and walking behavior but are beyond the influence of the planning process.

### *Transit*

An effective transit system displays three major characteristics:

- o a consistent, local or regional funding source to match Federal funds for construction and to cover operating expenses;
- o service area coverage (geographic, duration, and frequency) that is extensive enough to allow riders to access their homes, jobs, and shopping via the system; and,
- o transit-supportive residential and employment development patterns.

The first point addresses the fact that while some **Federal funds** are available for capital costs, these require a significant local match, and in some cases do not cover operating expenses. Most metropolitan areas fund both capital and operating costs through the creation of a regional transit district with its own taxation powers, something that is not currently an option under Idaho law. When no dedicated local or state funding exists for transit, services must compete for general revenue with other public services, such as police, fire, education, and parks.

Additionally, the cost-effectiveness of transit service is largely based upon the development pattern of the areas that it serves and its ability to connect a variety of destinations. Most studies have found that local bus service begins to be viable at minimum densities between 4 and 7 units per acre and that light rail (LRT) requires minimum densities of at least 9 units per acre. These densities increase the number of potential riders within walking distance of transit. Similarly, employment destinations can be more effectively served by transit when

they are walkable and compact. A mix of commercial land uses at transit stops also enables transit riders to meet a variety of needs with a single trip. Transit can also serve park-and-ride lots, but at lower frequency than for a compact, mixed-use area.

To create a truly multi-modal system, the communities of this region would need to locally implement at least some of these policies, creating pedestrian connections, bicycle routes, funding for transit, and a mix of locally compact and diverse land uses that would find these modes effective in meeting travel demands.

### ***Serving Growth and Development***

Major transportation investments can have a significant influence on development patterns, not just meeting existing transportation demands, but also providing new or improved access to adjacent and more distant properties. This could increase the marketability of those areas and result in new development that will add volume to the new transportation infrastructure. As such, transportation investments should be carefully directed to areas that local land use plans have targeted for growth and avoiding capacity increases in or near areas where development is not desired.

### ***Support the Existing Urban Core and Regional Activity Centers***

A variety of factors including lower taxes and land values, limited traffic congestion, and ease of land assembly make development of rural “greenfields” easier than developing at existing activity centers. To accomplish this piece of the vision, policy will need to make it easier and more attractive to redevelop and add to the existing business districts rather than developing new residential, commercial, and employment centers at the edges of existing development. Policies that will help to accomplish this could include:

- o simplify the approval process for projects in urbanized areas;
- o assemble land for redevelopment in existing centers;
- o negotiate protection of or purchase development rights for high-value rural areas to ensure that their uses are maintained;
- o limit extension of urban services to rural land to discourage conversion to urban uses; and,
- o prioritize short trips over long trips in transportation investments, limiting capacity improvements to areas at the periphery.

The commitment to existing concentrations of development in the vision statement must also be considered in light of concerns that many of the areas on the periphery have not received an adequate portion of the economic boom over the past several years. Traditionally, rural economic sectors have not experienced the same growth as information technology and retail, requiring innovative efforts to ensure the economic viability of more rural areas.

### ***Maintains the Region's Rural Character and Minimizes Impact on the Natural Environment***

The influx of population to the Treasure Valley region has increased the demand to convert rural land to residential uses. Many of those drawn to this region are coming because of their desire to live in a rural community, but to work in urbanized areas.

Placing restrictions on the conversion of rural, forested, and other environmentally sensitive lands to residential and other urban uses may maintain the rural character of parts of the region and minimize impact on the natural environment, but it infringes on private property rights, something consistently highlighted at the beginning of almost every comprehensive plan in the region.

### ***Placing Priority on Maintenance and Operations of Our Existing System***

Funding of maintenance and operations is essential for many jurisdictions in the Treasure Valley region. Rural areas have extensive roadway networks relative to their population; so, simply keeping up with maintenance can be an overwhelming task. Urbanized areas have limited space to add capacity to their system, therefore, their efforts need to be spent on maintaining those networks and making intersection and connectivity improvements to optimize the performance of the infrastructure they have.

As new development occurs, congestion increases most where previously rural areas are urbanizing. Many evaluation systems use the increase in congestion or delay as a significant factor for project selection and so they tend to give the highest priority to projects that increase capacity in areas where sprawl is occurring. To truly place priority on maintenance and system efficiency will require a greater acceptance of growing capacity demands at the urbanizing edge and a shift in policy to give priority to existing infrastructure. The question is, "Do we want to emphasize investments in the existing transportation system--maintenance, safety, lighting, landscaping--over building new transportation facilities in rural areas to meet growth?".

### ***Preserving Opportunities for Future Expansion***

Some large projects (river crossings, passenger rail, beltways, etc.) may be needed in the future but are not yet justified by the demand or financially viable at this point. In the meantime, right-of-way needs to be acquired and adjacent development monitored to ensure that the viability of those projects is not compromised. This process may involve banking land for future transit stations or encouraging dense, mixed-use development at those sites, recognizing that the capacity to serve those areas may not be met at this point. For example, the creation of publicly owned park-and-ride lots is one way to land bank for future density while serving an existing need and encouraging transit ridership.

### **Summary**

The regional vision is a description of what the region will become over time. The strength of the vision is in its ability to unite and motivate people and agencies to sustained action. The vision is translated into goals and objectives, which are then represented by objective and quantifiable performance measures. Goals and objectives identify paths and milestones that decisionmakers use to implement and adjust courses of action to achieve the vision.

Decisionmakers use the performance measures to examine the tradeoffs of choices they face and decide which course of action works best to accomplish an objective or a goal. The ability of the Long Range Transportation Plan to help accomplish the vision is, therefore, dependent on a strongly and broadly supported vision. The goals, objectives, and performance measures, which operate as translations of the vision, must be sound, support logical decisionmaking, and produce fair, equitable, and replicable outcomes.